

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

unable to note details of the animals colour etc. However the most outstanding mark was

a dark grey ring, or band, just above the black tip to the bushy tail.

JUBILEE GROUND,
BHUIJ, KUTCH,
May 12, 1984.

HIMMATSINHJI

3. OBSERVATIONS ON UNUSUAL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR IN ELEPHANTS

During our field studies at the Periyar Tiger Reserve two instances of unusual sexual behaviour were observed in wild elephants.

On 25th July 1979 a herd of elephants were grazing near the Periyar Lake shore at Manakkavala. There were two sub-adult tuskers in that herd. One tusker attempted to mount a female having a calf of about 2 years. The cow did not allow the subadult tusker to mount. The cow and the calf went towards the forest followed by the tusker. The tusker attempted to mount the cow again. The penis of the tusker was everted from its sheath throughout the period. The tusker continued to follow the same cow, with its trunk holding the tail of the cow and pulling it. The cow freed itself by moving forwards and hurriedly returned to the herd along with her calf. The tusker went to the other smaller tusker which was in knee deep water and smelled its penis with the trunk tip. The tusker then mounted the other tusker with its everted penis. The second tusker moved away and then they began pushing each other. The bigger tusker again mounted on the other tusker and after some time they left the water.

This kind of unusual sexual behaviour shown towards smaller individuals after several unsuccessful attempts to mount has been described by Eisenberg *et al.* (1971) in Asiatic elephants. They termed this behaviour as "re-directed sexual activity".

In another instance on 20th February 1980 a tusker slightly bigger than the one described earlier mounted a female elephant with a calf of about 4 years, after an elaborate and prolonged session of courting for about one and half hours.

During the courting the calf was about 30 m away from its mother feeding on grass. After successful copulation the elephants moved away.

In the first instance the calf was probably too small and dependent on the mother. The elephant seems to adjust its calving interval in such a way that the previous, calf is fairly independent before the birth of the next calf.

In Periyar the subadult tuskers seem to get comparatively more opportunities for mating due to the fewer number of adult tuskers in the elephant population.

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